

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan*

*Released on behalf of the Okinawa Joint Public Epidemiological Action Center for Health (JPEACH)*

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## **Ebola Virus Information Bulletin**

*Okinawa JPEACH*

OKINAWA, Japan—The U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued “Level 3” advisories on July 31 recommending that U. S. residents avoid nonessential travel to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone due to recent outbreaks of Ebola hemorrhagic fever (HF).

Ebola hemorrhagic fever is a severe and very often-fatal disease characterized by fever and hemorrhaging (severe bleeding). Since Ebola was identified in 1976, there have been more than 20 outbreaks across Central Africa with fatality rates as high as 90%. Currently, there are outbreaks of Ebola HF in the West Africa countries of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and two cases have been reported so far in Nigeria.

“At this time, there are no reported cases of Ebola in Southeast Asia and the current risk to Okinawa is extremely low,” said Air Force Col. John Cotton, Commander of the 18<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Medicine Squadron (AMDS) and Chairman of the Okinawa Joint Public Epidemiological Action Center for Health (JPEACH).

Ebola is transmitted by direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected person or through exposure to objects such as needles that have been contaminated with infected secretions.

According to JPEACH officials, the likelihood of contracting Ebola when traveling in areas endemic with the virus is considered extremely low unless there has been direct contact with the body fluids of symptomatic infected persons or animals, or with objects that have been contaminated with body fluids such as needles.

Recently, there have been a number of news reports of aid workers succumbing to the virus after working with Ebola patients in countries where outbreaks are occurring. JPEACH officials point out that the disease is commonly passed by direct contact with those already infected.

“The viruses that cause Ebola HF are often spread through families and friends because they come in close contact with infectious secretions when caring for ill or deceased persons,” said the Director of Public Health (DPH) at U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa.

People *cannot* transmit Ebola during the “incubation period”, which is the time between initial exposure and when a person shows symptoms of the disease.

“People are only contagious once they show symptoms,” said the DPH. “Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola virus, although 8-10 days is most common.”

Symptoms of Ebola include:

- fever
- muscle aches
- headache
- vomiting
- diarrhea

Additionally, 30% to 50% of Ebola patients experience hemorrhagic bleeding inside and outside of the body, as well as multi-organ dysfunction including liver damage, kidney failure, and central nervous system involvement.

JPEACH officials make the following recommendations for preventing exposure to the Ebola virus:

- If possible, avoid travel to countries in West Africa that are experiencing outbreaks
- If traveling or working in an affected country, avoid body fluids from sick or dead persons
- Practice good personal hygiene, sanitation and social distancing from people that appear ill
- Report symptoms to a medical care provider immediately

“Personnel who have recently travelled within the past 21 days to an affected country and are exhibiting symptoms must immediately notify and report to medical for testing and supportive care” said Cotton.

SOFA personnel and family members who have recently travelled to countries endemic with Ebola and have additional questions should contact military public health representatives at [nhoki-jpeach@med.navy.mil](mailto:nhoki-jpeach@med.navy.mil).

More information about the Ebola virus and Ebola hemorrhagic fever can be found at the U. S. Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola> or at the website of the World Health Organization (WHO) at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola>.

*The Okinawa Joint Public Epidemiological Action Center for Health (JPEACH) is a joint committee comprised of public health officials from the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy. The JPEACH was established to coordinate public health policy between all services to better serve the needs of the DoD community on Okinawa. The JPEACH also collaborates with the Government of Japan and Okinawa Prefectural Government on public health issues that affect both U. S. military installations and the local community.*

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